

Spirit  
gentleness  
patience  
s and  
fruit  
But  
faithfulness  
peace  
love  
joy  
kindness  
self-control  
goodness

***The Fruit of the Spirit***

Devotions for Lent

2009

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***The Fruit of the Spirit***

Devotions for Lent

2009

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At each Lenten service, a piece of fruit will be distributed, related to the evening's Biblical message and the weekly devotional theme. This piece of fruit can be placed in the small basket each family will receive on Ash Wednesday as a continuing reminder of this year's Lenten theme: *The Fruit of the Spirit*.

Each devotion in this book bears the unique mark of the person who wrote it. The different styles from page to page reflect the diversity, life experiences and growing faith of each of our Faith Community Lutheran Church contributors. We thank them for sharing these devotions with us.

# Love, Joy, Peace

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**February 25, 2009**

Galatians 5:16-25

Our Lenten theme this year, "The Fruit of the Spirit," is based on portions of this key passage in St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians. In contrast to the temptation to think that we are saved by our obedience to law, we are offered newness of life by the power of the Holy Spirit. God saves us through the gift of his Son, Jesus, received by the faith that the Holy Spirit inspires. Now "live by the Spirit" (verse 16), Paul tells us, and don't go back to the old self-defeating "acts of the sinful nature" (vs. 19).

In Lent 2009 we will be looking carefully at the fruit of such living. As we do so, please keep two things in mind. First, to live by the Holy Spirit is necessary...for all of us. Unlike the "gifts of the Spirit," as described elsewhere in the New Testament, this *fruit* of the Spirit is to be a part of living for *each* of us. Whereas "gifts" often vary from person to person, "fruit" (note the singular form) is to appear in the life of every believer in Christ. It's not a matter of choosing, for example, to have a slice of "goodness" but not "patience," or to have a piece of "faithfulness" but skip the "gentleness." All of this is *the* fruit....of life with Christ.... for *all* of us.

Secondly, I hope we will see this Lenten emphasis this year as a wonderful opportunity. One of the purposes of Lent is to be more intentional in our Christian growth, which means growing to become more and more like Jesus. In the words of Pastor Rick Warren, in *The Purpose-Driven Life*, we were "created to become like Christ." This Lenten season of 2009 should provide a special opportunity to become more like the persons we were created to be, and to live life as it ought to be lived.... to the full...with Christ.

*Lord, in this new season of Lent we pray for the presence and leading of your Holy Spirit, to fill us with the fruit of your Spirit, that our words and our lives may witness in every way to the One who died on the Cross for our sins, that we might live in your freedom now and with you in heaven forever.*  
*Amen* - Pastor Bruce Welander

**February 26, 2009**

Matthew 22: 34-40—Love

Do you find it hard to love God with all your heart and to love your neighbor as yourself? I would like to think that loving God is an important part of my beliefs and make up. But, loving my neighbor; that admittedly is harder. How many of us have resented that family of different ethnicity or religion that moved in across the street? Maybe your resentment comes from their disregard for what you considered to be a nice, quiet neighborhood. Does it bother you that they avoid eye contact with you or keep to themselves as much as possible? Different clothes, different language, different lifestyle; the list goes on forever. Look inside yourself, what is it that you must face that keeps you from loving and accepting those neighbors.

In the meantime, consider where we would be if God, with his unconditional love for us, had not given us his son to die on the cross. Such a loving sacrifice he gave up for us. Let us open our hearts to give our love to our neighbor. For if we can not forgive and love our neighbor, how can we honestly say we love God with all our heart and being. Loving God means loving each other unconditionally; without prejudice or resentment or fear. I know that it is much easier said than done. But, we must try for the sake of the eternal life we seek.

*Loving God, help us peel away from our hearts the resentments, prejudices, and fears we have of our neighbors. You have shown us how to give unconditional love, help us show our love for you by giving our love to others. We pray that you help us overcome our weaknesses. Amen*

Bob Kaiser

**February 27, 2009**

1 John 4: 7-12 –Love

*“This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him.”*

Wow! God loves us. No matter what we have, or have not done God loves us.

Recently I have been studying 1 Corinthians 2 and I have been awed by what God has prepared before time began for those of us who love Him. *“A wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began”* and *“no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him.”*

God loves us! As a father loves his child, as a mother loves her child, God loves us. And in 1 John our Heavenly Father speaks through John, whose heart is full of love, to remind us of how much He loves us. And just like we desire our children to get along and love each other, God wants us to love each other.

*Dear Father, Thank you for Your love which blankets us. For the love, comfort and care that You give us unconditionally. Help us to love others just as unconditionally. In the love of Your Son we pray. Amen.*

Linda Lerum

**February 28, 2009**

Philippians 4:4-7 - Joy (Peace too!)

Three months doesn't sound like a long time to be out of job...but it felt like a life time when we were going through it. Especially when we were barely getting by when there was a job. This is when I leaned on these verses with all my weight. Verse 6 was the one I had to talk myself into doing each and every day (and every moment), "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything; tell God your needs and don't forget to thank him for his answers." I felt a complete trust in God. I had faith that He had it all under control for us and I did not need to worry, that brought me great peace. Now I do thank and praise Him, for He has blessed us so greatly!

*Dear Lord, Thank you, thank you, for all the joy you have brought into my life. Help me daily to remember your words of comfort and peace when I put my trust and faith in you. Help me to share this powerful verse with those around me, so that they too can have peace. Amen*

Kaydene Hubert



**March 1, 2009**

Hebrews 12:1-2—Joy

"Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from beginning to end. He did not give up because of the cross. On the contrary, because of the joy that was waiting for him, he thought nothing of the disgrace of dying on the cross and He is now seated at the right side of God's throne." (Good News)

Like Jesus, are you focused on the joy set before you? Are you renewing yourself spiritually and living purposefully for the Lord daily? Are you looking forward to the goal of being with Him eternally?

I have a mental exercise that keeps me joyfully focused on Christ by going through the alphabet meditating on the attributes (of which there are many) of Christ. For example: He is Almighty, Blameless, Comforter, Defender, Eternal, Forgiving, Grace, Holy, Immortal, Joy, King of Kings, Lamb of God, Majestic, Nurturer, Omnipresent, Peace, Quiets my soul, Redeemer, Sovereign, Trustworthy, Upright, Victorious, Word, X-ray to my heart, Yoke-bearer, Zealous. Try this joyful spiritual exercise--you'll like it! It will be a "growing in the Lord" experience!

*Lord Jesus, may we keep focused on you, who began and finished this race we're in, until we see you face-to-face. Amen*

Nadine Heidt

**March 2, 2009**

John 14:25-27 - Peace

Growing up as a child, as most children do, we are very trusting of our moms and dads. I wouldn't say we are always obedient, but I would say that we have inner instinct to know that parents are there to protect, give council and advice. The hardest part I believe for my parents was wondering, "Would this kid ever get it?" They give constant instruction as so many parents do... "Don't touch that; don't eat that; chew your food; don't trust girls; brush your teeth; be nice to your brother; clean your room!" It is in those constant times of instruction that so often children turn everything off and ignore what is sometimes very helpful, protective, sincere instruction. But do we turn it off?

It takes a huge state of trust and maturity to really rely and recall on that wisdom and instruction, and the older I get the more I remember things my parents taught me. As we see in our scripture for today the downright beauty that Jesus has taught and taught and doesn't just leave us with just his three years of ministry and wisdom. He gives us the peace that knowing that the fullness of God will be made present to us as the Holy Spirit comes to teach and remind us of all the teachings and instructions of Jesus and God's heart. And not just a normal peace, but the very peace that Jesus himself had. Now that is peace— to sleep through a storm on a boat, walk on water, wander the desert for 40 days and come face to face with the Devil, have 12 goof ball teenage disciples following after him, that's peace.

He calls us with a great comfort and a great soothing peace that children do indeed get from being around their parents. We too can trust and rest assured that Jesus has given us a peace like nothing we could have ever experienced, that is beyond this world, and a peace that settles our hearts and minds when we rest on Him and His love for us.

*Father Constantly remind of your ever present love and help in times of need. May we be reminded of the beautiful peace You, your Son, and the Holy Spirit gives our hearts in all times. Amen.*

Brit Windel

**March 3, 2009**

Numbers 6:22-26—Peace

*The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee  
and give thee peace.*

For some reason I struggled reflecting on these words. Then suddenly I realized, that was my problem! This passage is not about words, it is about the gifts of God that one can not really explain. These gifts are meant to spark the spirit, fuel the soul and heal mentally and physically our earthly bodies. This requires that I stop for a moment and in that sometimes awkward quietness listen for the voice of God speaking unto me as God spoke unto Moses:

- I the Lord will bless you and keep you
- My face shall shine upon you and I will be gracious unto you
- I the Lord will lift up my countenance upon you

I am startled. The Lord's countenance upon me? The Lord's support for me? After what I have done! Sometimes I do things and say things that defy my God, my family and my friends. What about these times of being ashamed and really fear God and crawl about in despair with my eyes focused straight down staring at the very dirt from which I was created? What about God's approval then?

But I have learned that it is exactly then that I need to raise my eyes above my humble body, raising them to God and there "*rostro*" as the Spanish say, come *Face to Face* with this very God in repenting composure looking directly into the eyes of God, experiencing a sense of calm control wash over my body and mind as God "*Lifts up his countenance on me and gives me peace*".

*Dear God: I just want to thank you for not giving up on me in those times of me - giving up on myself. Amen*

Ron Wormke

# Patience

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**March 4, 2009**

Psalm 37:7-11—Patience

As a child I was never good at waiting, let alone waiting patiently. If I had a few minutes before it was time to go somewhere, I would sit at the piano and practice a song or two. Practicing the piano loudly with a favorite rendition of “*Onward Christian Soldiers*”, seemed like the perfect thing to do. It was a not so subtle reminder to others in my family that I was waiting, waiting, waiting.

And then there were those Christmas mornings with that silly rule to wait patiently until sunrise before opening gifts. Did you know daylight in December arrives long after 4 am? *Onward Christian Soldiers* just might have been one reason my family began a new tradition of opening gifts the night before, on Christmas Eve.

Psalm 37 reminds us that God’s time is not our time. He wants us to be still, to wait patiently for Him. Even as an adult, it is often difficult to wait patiently when it seems as though evil men with wicked ways are succeeding. Surely a chorus of “*Onward Christian Soldiers*” would be helpful right about now? But when we wait patiently, we are reminded that God is completely and utterly in control. . . .  
*“with the cross of Jesus going on before. Christ, the royal Master, leads against the foe; Forward into battle see His banners go!”*

*God, help us to be still and wait patiently for you. For you alone are utterly and ultimately in control. Amen.*

Nanette Goings

**March 5, 2009**

1 Timothy 1:15-17—Patience

This is an issue for me, one I work on all the time. I am impatient in life; I want everything yesterday. I want to be better, faster, more efficient, and farther along my path than I am. I am impatient with my boys. I get angry when they aren't ready, frustrated when I have to tell them something, oh maybe, five times. I am impatient with others. I get annoyed with the clerk who isn't fast enough to suit me. Don't they know I'm busy? Unfortunately, I'm serious when I admit these things. Did you notice all the I's? It's all about me, my time, my schedule, my agenda, my convenience, me, me, me. So, there you have it.

Fortunately, this is not how God treats me. Like Paul, I am a great sinner. Seriously, I am really *really* good at sinning; I've had a lot of practice. Did I say five times? I do the same thing hundreds of times and yet God remains ever patient, ever forgiving, ever graceful. Sigh – God is ever patient and I am forever trying.

I am certainly not the best example of Jesus' love and lessons. I am forgiven; I must forgive. I am the recipient of unending patience; I must be patient. I continue to struggle. I continue to pray.

*Dear Lord, thank you for Grace; I remain undeserving. I am grateful for your infinite patience. Lord, forgive me my debts. Help me forgive my debtors; show me how. Help me see and appreciate the incredible gifts you have given me. I am so very blessed. I desperately want to love my wonderful boys and those in my life, according to your example. Show me the way. Amen*

Cherylyn Pizza

**March 6, 2009**

Proverbs 14:29-30—Patience

*"It's smart to be patient, but it's stupid to lose your temper.  
It's healthy to be content, but envy can eat you up." CEV*

Regardless of your reading preference, there is something for you in the Bible. It includes epic battles, personal struggles, family conflict, history, miracles, poetry, prophecy, songs, and good news.

PROVERBS is packed with timeless words of wisdom.

Although PROVERBS was written centuries ago, it was written in a way that fits the fast-paced communication tools we use today: email, instant messages, and text messages. In our "wired" culture, words (often not sentences) and text (often not words) are flying wildly across cyberspace.

Think of PROVERBS as a way to receive a wisdom instant message directly from God. To receive one of God's wisdom messages, simply pick a verse in PROVERBS.

For further reflection, go to [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com) and peruse any of 20 different English translations.

The verses in PROVERBS selected for today are clear. The advice is in our best interest and not just a moral guide. If we lose our temper, we look like fools and regret it later. And, if we let envy get to us, we suffer an energy drain and loss of joy.

Another way to dig into a PROVERBS wisdom nugget is to work at shortening it even further. For example, today's reading could be shortened to:

"Be patient, stay calm. Be content, reject envy." OR  
"Patience+contentment." OR "P+C=JOY"

*Dear Lord, thank you for your words of wisdom and your words of salvation in the Bible. Lead us not into temptation but into those words instead.  
Amen.*

Bob Goings

**March 7, 2009**

Hebrews 6:10-11—Patience

A man's car stalled in heavy traffic as the light turned green. All his efforts to start the engine failed, and a chorus of honking behind him made matters worse. He finally got out of his car and walked back to the first driver, saying, "I'm sorry, but I can't seem to get my car started. If you'll go up there and give it a try, I'll stay here and blow your horn for you."

All of us tend to lose our "patience" with people and difficult tasks most when we are tired as when a family comes together after a busy day at the office or school, or doing unending housework. It also happens in Christian living when burdens of trying to live faithfully and prayers for guidance and strength don't seem to come together as we anticipate.

The writer of Hebrews today seeks to give our "patience" a big lift by reminding us that God is fully aware of our efforts to live a good life through our loving patience, our quiet service of human need, and our commitment to be forgiving and kind. The hope we receive in Jesus is that God is with us on a daily basis, in good and hard times. God promise to carry us when necessary all the way to life's end and beyond is God's perfect gift for patience.

*God of Hope, fill my life with hope. Help me to treat those I love most as kindly and with as much patient love as I do those I meet at work, at church, or at school. Amen.*

Todd Penson



**March 8, 2009**

James 5: 7-11– Patience

Today, my confession is patience. Yesterday it wasn't. Today my challenge is to decide where I direct or spend my focus. Is it discovering what patience is? Am I discovering that I have little or no patience? Am I looking to the one who is King of patience?

It is good that patience is one of the fruits of the Spirit for it helps us bring into focus that which we can not produce on our own strength – like trying to grow hair on a billiard ball. What our real job is, is to allow the Holy Spirit to work that conforming nature of Jesus into our being. I am overwhelmed on one hand that this task is to be done in my life. On the other hand I'm over whelmed not on one level of my life but on every level in everyone's life throughout the whole world. Only God can do this, to build His Church.

So I learn to submit and I take the fruits the Holy Spirit gives to my spirit to meditate on this image of Jesus inside of me. Patience is a fruit. I take that fruit which I need, and God knows that I need for others, like a food group, like protein, like carbohydrates in my diet so my being can function like a 'well oiled', obedient machine: to bow before the Lord, to serve, to dance, to walk step-by-step humbly with my Jesus.

*Thank you Jesus, for wanting me to be with you and for wanting to be with me. Amen*

Lee Quaintance

**March 9, 2009**

Acts 26:1-3—Patience

In these verses, Paul is addressed by King Agrippa, "You are permitted to speak for yourself," Paul then speaks in his own defense: "I beg you to hear me patiently." He knew this was going to be a lengthy verbal defense!

There are many times in my life journey that I need the patience of others, the patience for them to have a "long holding of the mind" before giving way to any anger or provocation towards me, the patience to hear me completely. This though, works in two ways, both giving and receiving.

In Proverbs the practicality of patience is stressed, because it helps avoid strife and encourages a wise prioritizing of our human affairs, especially when provocation might be involved.

During my prayer time I ask the Lord to be patient with me. In the Psalms, David speaks: "Lord, hear my voice." "Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication." "Lord incline your ear unto me."

Many times I am not the listener that I pray to be. This requires me to have an attitude adjustment by taking my thoughts captive. Open my eyes from darkness to light in God's WORD. Open my ears to listen with patience. May the Holy Spirit train me by opening my ears to the kind of words that come out of my mouth.

*Holy Spirit, be my guide and teacher. Open my spiritual eyes, ears, and heart to be receptive to your prompting. I ask for discernment to listen with patience, wisdom, understanding, and with the nonjudgmental love of Christ. This I pray in the name of Jesus. Amen*

Thelma McDonald

**March 10, 2009**

Colossians 3:12-15—Patience

I used to think I was good at being “nice”. I’ll bring you a meal, I’ll let you go first if you have a few groceries, I’ll let you merge in front of me, I’m good at listening, especially to kids, I’ll bring you flowers on your birthday...

And one day, God rocked my world. How about a job working with special ed kids? And how about instead of reading and playing games like you were told life would be like, I give you a child who has a mood disorder and violent tendencies?

Here’s what I learned about myself. I was good at being nice when nice was easy.

It’s not so easy to have compassion for someone who regularly tells you they hate you and you are stupid, or to be kind to someone who has given you a bruised shin and a fat lip; it’s not so easy to be humble when you think ‘my kids would never get away with something like this’, or to be patient with someone who has run from you, been throwing chairs and is hiding from you for the third or fourth time today...

But here’s what else I learned. God made this child this way. And put me in that child’s world to teach me things about myself. He gave me strength to bear with and forgive and love, everyday. Just as he bears with, and forgives and loves me – even when I am ugly and it’s not easy.

*Lord, thank you that while we are all different, you made each one of us in your image. Help us to be patient with those we don’t understand, to forgive those who hurt us, and to let your love flow through us to others who are difficult to love. In Jesus name, Amen.*

Deb Bonner

# Kindness

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**March 11, 2009**

Romans 2:1-4—Kindness

A lay renewal group came to our church to help us reach a new level of spirituality. There were Bible studies and small group discussions. On the last night, everyone joined a small group of 6-8 people including a Lay Renewal representative. In the small group, the leader was to lead us in prayer. Just before the prayer, our leader announced to my small group that he especially wanted the group to pray for me since he felt the Spirit telling him that I might not know the Lord as I should. I was flabbergasted, embarrassed, and hurt. I had never met this man before! I ran out of the church crying. How dare he? He didn't even know me.

What right did he have to judge me? As he pointed one finger at me, were there not three fingers pointing back to him? Ah, how easy it is to begin the judging, pointing game! Perhaps I did need to draw closer to God—who doesn't? But were his words the most helpful? Because of God's goodness to me, I eventually could forgive this man.

All God's people are less than who they should be. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) But God in infinite wisdom, love, and grace reminds us of what God's salvation means for us and through the ultimate kindness of God, leads us to repentance.

*God of patience, kindness and forbearance, forgive me when I fail you; forgive me when I judge others. May I imitate you in the way I treat others. Amen.*

Tyger Penson

**March 12, 2009**

Titus 3:3-7—Kindness

Perhaps this reading should begin with verse one, in which St. Paul tells Titus to “Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.” Then St. Paul reminds us what we used to be: foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasure, living in malice and envy, hated and hating . Ugh! Were we really like that, ever? And in the dark of the night, are we sure that we are completely free of all those ugly behaviors now?

It’s one thing to be told, over and over, what we should be, how we should behave. Our mothers and fathers and teachers thought (and think) it’s their job to do just that. We ducked our heads and tried no ignore them. It’s so tiresome. Nag, nag, nag.

But then the whole mood of Chapter Three changes; then St. Paul pours the oil of the gospel on our scratchy souls. “When the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us. . .” And why? Why is he not your garden variety scold? Why is he different? I love the description of Our Savior’s kindness that follows. Because he loved us, because he is inherently merciful, he pours his grace out on us so that we may be his own heirs, heirs of eternal life. Instead of scolding, he says to us, “Come into my family. Here is my Spirit, yours now, to love you into the attitudes and behaviors that belong to the family, and to bring you one day into the fullness of the life that has no end.” And that is Grace. And there is no kindness in this world or the next that is greater than his grace.

*Fill us, oh Lord, with attitudes and behaviors which show we belong in the family. We know one day we will truly come face to face with the fullness of life that has no end. Amen.*

Chris Goble

**March 13, 2009**

Romans 11:22—Kindness

As we read today's passage, we quickly encounter the word "therefore". One principle of studying the Bible is that, when this word is used, it is best to look back and see what it is "there for". In Chapter 11, Paul is speaking of the future of the Jews, but is also sending application messages to the Gentiles. Looking back to verse 20, Paul contrasts the result of judgment to the Jews because of their unbelief with the Roman Christians for "**standing by their faith**".

From Romans 10:17, we know that faith comes from "hearing the message ... through the word of Christ". This is our call to be consistent in worship and in study of God's Word. More importantly, we know that faith **comes by standing in the grace of God**. God's gracious and unmerited favor is what brings us into faith. We cannot do it for ourselves. With the gift of God's grace and mercy, we have a responsibility to demonstrate those same traits to others. We are then passing on God's attributes to others as we continue in the fruits of the spirit and advance the Gospel of Christ.

*Father, grant us insights into your wonderful nature as we travel through our Lenten journey. Help us that we might continue in the example that you offer for us and that we might share your love with those around us.. We pray in the name of your Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ... Amen.*

John Benson

**March 14, 2009**

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 - Kindness

1 Corinthians 13:4 states "Love is patient and kind..." That seems straightforward enough! I can love people with patience and kindness...as long as they are nice to me. However, take a deeper look at the meaning behind these words and our need for Jesus shines forth.

Love = agape = brotherly love, affection, good will, benevolence

Patient = Makrothumeo = to be of a long spirit, not to lose heart; to persevere patiently and bravely enduring misfortunes and troubles; to be patient in bearing the offenses and injuries of others; to be longsuffering, slow to anger, slow to punish.

Kind = Chresteuomai = to show one's self mild, to be kind, use kindness

If that standard doesn't make you squirm, we are also called to love perfectly in this manner (Matthew 5:48). We obviously cannot pull this off. Our thoughts, words, and deeds demonstrate our inability to love this way. We miss the mark...we sin. However, this manner of love should be the goal of all those who belong to Christ (Phil 3:12). And there is the key...belonging to Christ.

God himself demonstrates this love through his Son. Despite the fact we are despicable sinners, God is longsuffering and kind in his love for us. Instead of giving us what we deserve...to be squished like bugs, He shows perfect love. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

*Father, I pray that eyes dimmed by sin that pass over these words may be lead to the light of your Son. Father, grant the gift of repentance and faith in the only hope for their soul; Jesus. For it is through Him alone that the cost of our sins was paid and Your just wrath was satisfied. Thank you, also, for the Holy Spirit. By whom believers are indwelt and receive instruction to love as you require. Thank you for your many gifts and blessings, all of which we are undeserving. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen*

Ty Cito



**March 15, 2009**

Proverbs 11:17-18—Kindness

In this passage we are reminded of how much we hurt ourselves by hurting others. Often we carelessly say or do something that hurts someone else. We often condone our behavior by saying or thinking that the other person in some way deserved our harsh words or behaviors.

I am trying, sometimes unsuccessfully, to guard my actions and my speech to avoid hurting others. I know that I need God's help in doing this. I know that hurting another person and holding a grudge against another person through my actions or words hurts me too.

*Dear God, help me to think before I speak and act so that I may be a blessing instead of a burden on other people.  
Amen*

Donna Wormke

**March 16, 2009**

Isaiah 54:7-8—Kindness

The kindness and compassion of God is not on a schedule. It is not any less when it is invisible or any more when it is staring us in the face. Like God's kindness and compassion for us, ours for others should never be on a to-do list.

Kindness is something that takes little to no effort. It is a gift we can give with as little as a smile. Aesop said it perfectly, "No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted."

Compassion on the other hand is about feeling one's pain or suffering and choosing to do something to try to alleviate that pain or suffering. This takes a bit more effort but can be as little as opening a door for someone or listening to one's heartache.

For some, kindness and compassion just happen. They have always known it and it is part of their being. For others, it takes some work – just paying attention to when it is given and received is the first step to making it part of our everyday lives.

*Dear God – keep us ever mindful of the kindness and compassion you always show us. Let this be a model for how we treat and receive others. Help us notice the kindness and compassion we receive every day from family, friends, co-workers and even strangers. Help us to use your many acts of kindness and compassion as a model for the way we treat those who come in and out of our lives everyday. Amen.*

Cindy Noble

**March 17, 2009**

2 Corinthians 6:3-6—Kindness

Paul is instructing the Corinthian church to be, among other things, kind. If Paul is being so kind, why is he experiencing all the anguish? Perhaps our minds log-jamb because a post-modern world teaches to tolerate and accept any idea of god no matter how illogical.

Kindness today seems more about telling people what they want to hear vs. telling people what they NEED to hear. People want to hear how God loves them and is for them all the time. However, this is antithetical to scripture. We are fallen sinners and left to our own devices we will receive God's love in the form of His justice; the end result being hell. This is what Paul preached on many occasions (Jesus too mind you); so you can see why Paul's brand of kindness resulted in riots, beatings and the like.

People don't enjoy being told they are wrong and having God's holiness illumine our sin hurts. However, when viewed through the lens of eternity, Paul is acting in a most kind way. He is instructing the church to place no stumbling block in the path to the cross. He is sacrificing his personal safety (life) in order to plead with lost people to flee the wrath to come and cling tightly to the Cross of Christ in repentance and faith. For it is only through the work of Jesus that we receive God's mercy and grace and avoid His perfect justice.

Now that is Biblical kindness!

*Father, help us to find a winsome way to open your law to a sinful world in order to pierce their hearts of stone. Help us to clearly explain that forgiveness is needed and can only be received through repentance and faith in the work of your Son and our Savior Jesus Christ. It is in His name we pray. Amen.*

Ty Cito

# Goodness

Spirit  
gentleness  
patience  
and  
fruit  
But  
faithfulness  
peace  
love  
joy  
kindness  
self-control  
of

**March 18, 2009**

Psalm 23:1-6—Goodness

“Goodness and love will follow me”

This is probably one of the best-known bible verses in Psalms. It was one that we memorized in confirmation classes way back when. To this day it is also one of the most comforting verses.

To think that “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want”. I have everything I could possibly need or want. He makes me feel secure and safe. He restores my soul when I am weary and having trouble remembering that I have all that I need. He is with us even in our darkest hours. How blessed are we to know that God is with us at all times--during the good and the bad. We have not earned this, but as Christians we have been given this unbelievable gift. We are especially reminded of this during the Lenten Season. Blessed are we.

*Father, I ask you to bless all who are reading this right now. Show them a new revelation of Your love and power. Holy Spirit, I ask you to minister to their spirit at this very moment. Where there is pain, give them your peace and mercy. Where there is self-doubt release a renewed confidence through your grace. Where there is need, I ask you to fulfill their needs. Bless their homes, families, finances, their goings and their comings. Amen.*

Sally Beckner

**March 19, 2009**

2 Peter 1:3-9 - Goodness

Second Peter tells us of yet another promise God has given us. He has given us the knowledge and virtue to become more Christ-like. And with this promise comes responsibilities to continue growing in faith and bear spiritual fruit to share with others.

I can identify with this passage in my role as a mother. With two little girls at home, I feel blessed to have them in my life and love on them everyday. But with this beautiful relationship also comes awesome responsibility. Some days are long and chaotic. When I am trying to conquer my daily tasks alone, I can feel like a failure. But then God gives me a gentle reminder that He is with me and this is all part of the journey. Being a mother, just like being a Christian, might be tough at times. However, we can take heart and gain strength because God has given us the knowledge to rise above this world.

*Dear Lord, Thank you for your constant presence in my life. Help me to continue to grow in my faith and bear fruit for the world to see. Amen.*

Stephanie Demosthenes

**March 20, 2009**

Psalm 27: 13-14—Goodness

"I saw God today," is a line from a recent, popular country-western song. Have you seen the goodness and glory of God recently? Were you patient, but with anxious anticipation? Or, were you just too busy to notice what was right there for you? I did experience God's goodness recently when I met my first granddaughter when she was only four hours old. So beautiful, so perfect, such a blessing from God.

David in this psalm said we need to wait and trust God to experience his goodness. How long do we have to wait? I would like to think that you really do not have to wait long at all to see God's gracious goodness. His goodness is all around us, small signs; large, joyous moments. It could be as simple as a child's carefree giggle or as wondrous as the celebration of a 60th wedding anniversary.

Have we not all experienced moments of his goodness? Wait for it, observe it, touch it, smell it; God's goodness is all around us. Rejoice in what has been given to you by a great and generous God.

*Blessed Holy Father, thank you for all the goodness you have given us. Though we often fail to take the time to notice the goodness around us, help us to take time to experience what you have so freely given to us. In your blessed son's name we pray. Amen*

Bob Kaiser

**March 21, 2009**

Romans 15:14-16—Goodness

Did you ever have a teacher or professor or maybe even a parent tell you that you had potential to be great? That you were a good kid and had some great things going for you? You might recall the great feeling you received of knowing that someone was really watching you and your actions and was encouraging you on to greatness.

Paul in this passage gives the Romans some great encouragement and challenge all in the same breath. He has had to remind them again and again of their duty to be proclaim-ers of the Good News! It's like in school or at work when you mess up... What do you respond better to? Someone telling you are a failure and you can't do the job and kicking you while your down? Or, letting you know when you have messed up but immediately, giving that encouragement and reminder of what you are capable of , helping pick you up and sort out what the next steps are and pushing you on towards excellence? Well no one wants to be kicked while they are down...or even kicked at all. So here we see Paul reminding them of the times he has had to spur them on.

Paul really cares for this church and gives them some amazing encouragement in his first few words. He reminds them that 'Hey sometimes I've had to get on you guys, but man you are doing great. You are loving one another and taking care of one another's needs because of your goodness. You are all full of the knowledge to help one another and grow in your relationships with God"! That is a huge compliment.

So the question is, are we a church full of the goodness and love that is encouraging one another to grow and welcoming to those on the outside so that they may grow in knowing God more with us? To answer this you just need to come to a WNLive, Sunday School, Worship Service, help with our Outreach programs, or check out our prayer-chain to find your answer. We are a church that cares for one another and cares for our community.

We have had great instruction over the years and examples just like Paul in how to be that 'acceptable offering' to God for others. Now with the back patting done, we must always remember to stay focused in praising God and being full of goodness and love to one another and to this community, always knowing that in God's strength there is always more that we can do to share that 'knowledge and hope' to others.

*God, we thank you for this church filled with love and goodness. You have blessed all those here and that blessing goes out from these walls on a weekly basis. We pray that you would help us continue and be spurred on to be an even greater example of your love to this community and to our members here at Faith Community. Amen*

Brit Windel



**March 22, 2009**

Luke 6:37-38—Goodness

In the deepest sense, love is the prerequisite of Christianity: to feel toward enemies what others feel toward friends. Love manifests itself in giving (John 3:16; Eph.5:25). The world can usually conquer the person who fights back, but it doesn't know how to deal with the person who repays every wrong with kindness. To love means to always be the same; not subject to moods, to suffer long, to rejoice with the truth, to bear, believe, hope, and endure all things. To express this love, we must have the Holy Spirit - we can't achieve it ourselves!

There are two things love doesn't do.....it doesn't judge people's motives and it doesn't condemn. However, there are certain areas in which Christians must "judge" (1 Corinthians 4:1-5), but we must not impugn motives or assassinate character. (When we use the word "judge" to mean discern, it is a good thing. Discernment protects us whereas judgment attacks others.)

It is a fixed principle in life that we reap according to our sowing (2 Corinthians 9:6). While we can't haul our SUV and our financial portfolio to Heaven, we can store up treasures for eternity - in the form of every act of love and kindness ever extended in the name of Jesus (1 Timothy 6:19). As we take stock of our remaining days, the love that should matter most to us is the love that matters most to God.

*Fill me with joy in your presence, Lord, and make me ready, willing, and available to tell others about Your love! Amen.*

Leroy Heidt

**March 23, 2009**

Amos 5:14-15—Goodness

Five feet from the back of our house there is an eighteen inch wide tree stump cut off at ground level. It looks very dead except that from one side a tree has sprouted up, now twenty feet tall!

The Old Testament prophet Amos, by vocation a gardener of sycamore trees, has warned God's people to live in ways that better reflect their calling as God's people in God's world. He particularly calls for the practice of justice and mercy in their interactions with each other and other persons they encounter in business and the wider community. A good God wants people to live the good life by practicing the art of goodness in their life choices.

Amos is a poet who writes his word from God in a beautiful poetic way, often repeating the same appeals from God in different phrases—all in hopes that varied approaches will open more hearts to hear. God uses many approaches to us today also, to reach our lives with words of hope and/or direction—Scripture, songs, sermons, life experiences—always encouraging brothers or sisters in faith.

Sometimes when life has us “stumped” as to life's meaning or right choices, listen for a Word from God that can sprout new life in you.

*God of all goodness, when doubt or sin cuts me off from you and others around me, raise me up to new life. Help me to show goodness to others as you show goodness to me. Amen.*

Todd Penson

**March 24, 2009**

Luke 6:32-36 -Goodness

You do good to me, I will do good to you and vice versa. Tit for tat. This seems to be the way the world operates. But the reading for today reminds us that as a Christian, MORE is expected of us. Our instructions are a little harder to follow, but we have an excellent teacher--a perfect example.

The passage for today in Luke 6 puts it this way: "And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that." (vs.33) I am ashamed to say that most often when someone does a mean thing to me, this "nice little Christian lady" comes uncorked! Hey, Buddy, I hope you get yours! I hope you get what you deserve! I am not thinking how I might do a good turn for that guy! What's the saying? "Don't get mad--get even!"

WHOA! That's when I need to stop and think of Jesus' words to me. "But love your enemies. Do good to them ...." And again, "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." I would be in big, big trouble if God gave me what I deserve. And I think of my perfect example who says, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." An example who forgives me over and over again. Even though I disappoint Him and let Him down, my Savior does only good to me. This is such a hard thing--to do GOOD to people who don't do good to me. It is a hard thing to LOVE my enemies! I need help ....

*Oh, Merciful Father, please help me to love my enemies and do good to those who are not good to me. Help me to control my temper and see others through Your eyes. I know that you love me and continually do good to me--even though I let You down and go my willful way. Help me to turn from my sin and walk in Your way and follow Your beautiful and perfect example. In Jesus' precious name I pray, AMEN*

Wanda Gwinn

# Faithfulness

Spirit  
gentleness  
patience  
and  
goodness  
fruit  
But  
faithfulness  
peace  
love  
joy  
kindness  
self-control

**March 25, 2009**

Revelation 2:8-10—Faithfulness

In this passage, John relates that God "...knows [our] afflictions and [our] poverty – yet [we] are rich!" He adds that the devil will put us to the test, but we should "...be faithful, even to the point of death, and God will give [us] the crown of life."

We are immersed in the classic struggle of good versus evil. Temptations to do wrong abound in our world. And after all, we rationalize that we're just human and give in to them at times. But we must remain focused on the ultimate goal of our lives as set out by Christ.

Jesus suffered temptations in his forty days in the desert. He turned down an offer of the world, with its trappings of wealth and power, to suffer death in order that good should ultimately win the battle.

And so we know the final outcome of the struggle. Earthly, physical life does not last forever. We must prepare ourselves by following Christ's example and relying upon his grace that we might reap the fruits of the eternal, spiritual life.

*Heavenly Father, during this Lenten season and always, remind us of the wealth we have in following Christ and remaining faithful to your word.*

Nick Lehnert

**March 26, 2009**

2 Thessalonians 3:1-5—Faithfulness

Let the word of our Lord spread rapidly and at the same time, express the idea of being triumphed. 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5 reads, “Finally, Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, as it is with you, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you. Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.”

God our Father is true to his word; he is faithful and will stand watch over us, so that not even the evil one, Satan himself, can get hold of us. With prayer, may the Lord direct or lead your heart towards love and patience. This verse has reminded me of the importance of prayer and how it impacts my faith alone. I am comforted by the word of God, as well as the faithfulness he shares upon me.

*Dear Heavenly Father, I pray that your word will live through me and shine onto those whom are wicked and have no faith. With confidence I proclaim that you are a faithful Lord. Your word is comforting, patient and loving. Amen*

Rygeil Hubert

**March 27, 2009**

2 Timothy 2:11-13—Faithfulness

It was on my birthday 3 years ago when I realized that my friend Carol was going to lose her battle with cancer. Another friend had a party to celebrate my birthday and I drove Carol to and from the party. After dropping off Carol, I cried the whole way home.

The following morning as I was walking around MacIntosh Lake, I was absorbed with thoughts of anger and hopelessness, “God, where are you?” “Why does this have to happen?” “Can’t you heal her?” .....That is when I passed a man who appeared to be talking to me and pointing at the sky. I had on my IPOD so I could not hear him and was thinking “whatever – leave me alone – I’m angry”. Something made me stop, turn around and ask him what he said and he again pointed up. There, perched in an old dead cottonwood tree against a cloudless azure sky sat a bald eagle. He was so beautiful and majestic that it took my breath away.

The Biblical references about eagles came immediately to mind. I realized instantly that God was there. He had been there the entire journey with Carol. God was not unfaithful; I was the one who was faithless. Even though things were not the way I wanted, I knew through the rest of our journey together, God would be there with Carol and me. I try very hard now to remember to keep my eyes focused on Him, but at those times when I stumble and lose faith, He always sends me a reminder that He is forever faithful.

*Dear Jesus, thank you for the promise you gave to us that You will remain faithful even in our times of unfaithfulness. Help us to remain ever faithful in You. You are a beautiful and majestic God. Amen!*

Nancy Tway

**March 28, 2009**

Hebrews 11:8-12– Faithfulness

“Keep the faith, baby”. You may be familiar with this phrase from the 60’s or as the title of a 2002 movie. It implies that you should maintain a positive focus and everything will turn out for the best.

Did Abraham keep the faith? Most certainly, yes! Abraham’s faith was so focused and so positive with such a strong desire to obey God that he knew that by his actions, he would be rewarded with everlasting life. These verses tell a simple story, of a man who believed he should do what God says. So, when God gave him instruction, he obeyed!

Abraham’s faith in God was tested ... and rewarded. By faith, he “was called to go to a place ... even though he did not know where he was going”. By faith, he made his home there, although he “was like a stranger in a foreign land”. And by faith, he was rewarded by being “enabled to become a father” (although he and his wife Sarah were very old). And from that son a whole nation of people came, “as countless as the sand on the seashore.” From that nation, the Messiah came to live and die for us. Simple, obedient trust in God was involved in the coming of the Messiah. Simple faith in God ... rewarded!

The kind of faith illustrated by Abraham and Sarah is just what we need today. It means, hearing, believing and doing what God says, trusting His promise of a better place: “...for here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.” (Heb. 13:14).

*Heavenly Father, I believe in your promise of everlasting life. I trust in You and have faith that the Holy Spirit will guide me. Grant me the strength of Abraham, so that I will obey Your Word. Amen.*

Gary Yost



**March 29, 2009**

Colossians 1:3-8—Faithfulness

As I read and reflected on the opening verses of Paul's epistle to the church at Colossae, two words kept coming to the forefront of my thoughts; faithful reputation. Paul was praising the Colossians not because at that time he had actually witnessed their deep faith and love for God, but simply because he had heard about it from Epaphras. And what Epaphras had told him was so compelling that it had led Paul to open his letter by stating that "We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love you have for all the saints..." The faithful reputation of the Colossians had truly preceded them.

I looked up the word reputation in the dictionary and found that it is defined as:

*The overall quality or character as seen  
or judged by people in general*

What a fantastic reputation the church at Colossae had; a reputation for faith and love. These are qualities that we can all exhibit in our daily lives, both individually and together as a community. I can think of very little that would be better than to be seen by others as a person and church of faith and love.

*Dear Lord, help us to learn from the example of the church at Colossae. Give us the strength to loudly proclaim our faithfulness in you. Open our hearts to truly love you and one another. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.*

Phil Spreier

**March 30, 2009**

Luke 16: 10-13—Faithfulness

Why do you suppose God places such an emphasis on being faithful with our money? Does God really need our money, or is God talking about money in particular because we struggle with letting go of it? We find comfort in the control we have over our money. It enables us to pay our mortgage and our bills, while giving those we love a more comfortable life.

When we surrender that control, we are likely to struggle in life and this makes us feel vulnerable. It is both interesting and a bit funny that we have less trouble giving our problems over to the LORD and asking him to do his will with us, and then we withdraw when God asks us to surrender all that we have and follow Him.

It isn't the money we have that God is concerned with, rather he is concerned with our faithfulness to him in all matters of our lives. A verse from one of my favorite songs says, "One more day, one more step. See, I am preparing you for myself, and when you can't hear my voice, please just trust my plan. I am the LORD. I see you and yes, I understand.

*LORD, thank you for all the many blessing in my life. Please help me surrender all aspects of my life to you. Help me to be faithful to you as you are always faithful to me. Amen.*

Kimberly Scruggs

**March 31, 2009**

**1 Corinthians 10:11-13—Faithfulness**

“He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.” I dislike it when people say this to me. When I hear this, it sounds patronizing, like a pat on the head saying ‘God wouldn’t allow this trial if it were too much for you’, so what are you worrying about? To me it seems like people are implying that because it’s ultimately limited by God, it’s easy. That if you fall, you were weak. Well, it’s anything but easy. If it was easy, we’d all be thin, few would smoke or drink too much, marriages would last, banks wouldn’t collapse.....

That Satan is a clever, persistent, strong, and yes, patient adversary.

I think the real threat of temptation isn’t the great big things. It’s not the one-night opportunity to cheat on your spouse; that’s easy to resist. You say no and walk away – done, clean. I think that genuine temptation is a slippery slope. Integrity is traded in nickels and dimes. Are you looking the other way rather than standing up for what is right? Do you let comments pass without response in order not to disrupt things? Are you emotionally involved with a co-worker when you should be investing those emotions at home? When is ‘just friends’ just friends and where does it become more? Does a compliment turn your head? How much? Did you keep the extra change?

Personally, I need to constantly monitor my integrity. Otherwise it slips through my fingers. I find that when I am vigilant about the little temptations; the big ones really are easy. God is forever faithful. Me, I have to work at it.

*I earnestly pray: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive my debts, as I may forgive my debtors. **And lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil.** For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen*

Cherylyn Pizza

# Gentleness, Self-Control

Spirit  
gentleness  
patience  
and  
fruit  
But  
faithfulness  
peace  
love  
joy  
kindness  
self-control  
of  
goodness

**April 1, 2009**

Matthew 11:28-30—Gentleness

The World always tends to make things too complicated. Jesus, on the other hand, came to simplify things for us. After generations of nit-picking and hair-splitting, the Jews had defined God's commandments in such a complicated way that no one could possibly comprehend, let alone follow them. Jesus narrowed it down when he was asked which commandments were most important. In Matthew 22, a Pharisee asks, <sup>36</sup>"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" <sup>37</sup>Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' <sup>38</sup>This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup>And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' <sup>40</sup>All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

We continue to make things hard for ourselves to this day by misplacing our trust. We rely on the government, the union or the legal system to solve our problems or "do something" for us. We don't very often put the other guy before ourselves in important situations, or consider what our purpose is on earth: to give glory to God.

Can we make loving God our life's work, right where we are? That is the yoke Jesus asks us to take upon ourselves. A song by Mercy Me states:

*Believe it or not but life is not apparently, About me anyways  
But I have met the One who really is worthy, So let me say  
So long, self*

If we are not concerned too much with ourselves, we become gentle, humble like Jesus, putting God first, others second and ourselves last. Bearing the yoke is easy, but picking it up is harder.

*Dear Lord,  
Help me to take up your yoke and find rest for my soul. Keep  
me mindful of your loving kindness, and show it to those around  
me every second of every day, with an attitude of gratitude and  
service. Amen*

Marcie Mason

**April 2, 2009**

Isaiah 40:9-11—Gentleness

*He tends his flock like a Shepherd:  
He gathers the lambs in His arms  
and carries them close to His heart;  
He gently leads those that have young.*

Yet again — the Good Shepherd, kind and gentle. You can “see” our Lord (in this verse) as he gathers us in close and holds the children in His bosom, and leads us to a place with Him.

I remember our son, Kirk, as a premature baby; he had to stay in the hospital for four weeks. We finally celebrated the day he came home at a whopping 5 lbs. 3 oz. How precious was this new little person. I held him close to my bosom, rocking him, feeding him, watching him when he was awake and when he slept. And then a few years later, our daughter Kara was born. I cuddled her, and was as gentle with her as I had been with Kirk. Both were precious gifts from God.

Now we’re practicing and teaching “gentleness” in the next generation. We have three grandchildren, more precious and priceless than any gifts God could ever give us. Now I have more time to hold them, talk to them, cuddle them, be even more gentle and purposeful as I interact with them at 23, 19, and 15 months of age. How much they understand, how rich their giggles and smiles; how they make me appreciate that today is a special gift. God has carried His blessing of children to another level. The Lord loves us and keeps us close, and in the same way, we gather our children and grandchildren to us teaching them about Jesus and saying their prayers with them—as we watch the miracles of life develop in their lives.

*Gentle Shepherd, You are our ideal. You gently lead us to You and provide the caring, love and gentleness You ask us to pass on to our children. Thank you, Lord, that You are always with us to lead and guide us. In your Holy and Precious Name. Amen*

Janelle Olson

**April 3, 2009**

Philippians 4:4-7 - Gentleness

In this lesson, Paul writes to us. He has a rather simple set of instructions for us to follow. Although the instructions are short, they can often times be the most difficult to carry out. Scripture instructs us to "let everyone see that we are considerate in all we do." Simply stated; be gentle to others. However, this is sometimes tough to do. Have you ever been asked to do something that might make you feel uncomfortable-like serving in an unfamiliar capacity? If we lead with a Spirit-led life and not a "me-led" life, we can accomplish this. I believe that this can become a kind of contagious attitude; it allows us to live our lives in a Christ-like way.

Secondly Paul reminds us of why we need to be obedient to God. The fact is, "The Lord is coming soon". We can't waste any time; He's on His way. The question for us is *not* Who or What; it's When. This reminds me of a bumper sticker that says, "Jesus is coming-look busy." It really should say, "Jesus is coming-be ready." We have been blessed with the ability to be gentle to others; we need to be patient, compassionate, and show our love towards others.

*Lord and Heavenly Father, we pray to you this day. We ask for the ability to be gentle to all of those around us. Lord, remind us that we have been called to carry Your cross. Amen.*

Wayne Hubert

**April 4, 2009**

Proverbs 15:1-2 Self-control

How often do we jump to conclusions without the entire story? What if that guy who pulled out in front of you just got the call that his loved one was in a car accident and was rushing to the hospital? If you knew that, would you still you make an angry gesture at him or just take a moment to pray for him and let our Lord handle it?

Many years ago, I was the "Girl Scout Cookie Mom" for my daughter's troop. One day I had to make a deposit in the council account at one bank and then go to another bank across town to deposit in the troop account. I was hurrying my toddler along, but like most toddlers she wanted to explore. She must have touched everything in that bank! The teller must have triple counted all those hard earned dollar bills. I was annoyed that this woman was just taking so long, and my toddler was not helping fulfill my need to pick up the pace of these errands! I am sure that it was not one of my shining moments as a parent. I probably said several times for her to stay beside me and to hurry up! Finally, I got out of the first bank and hurried across town to the second bank. I was walking into the second bank with my toddler on my hip, and I opened the door to that branch to a most unnerving sight. All of the bank employees and customers were on the floor face down! I had missed an armed gunman by mere seconds. Boy, did I regret my frustration with the teller and my toddler. I tearfully thanked our most Gracious God for showing me that my anger was foolish. My words were foolish. Hurrying was foolish. Self-control is not foolish.

*Dear Lord, please help us to all practice patience and self-control. Help us to learn to be gentle with our actions and words to others. Amen*

Erika West



**April 5, 2009**

Acts 24:24-26—Self-control

Take a few extra minutes today to read Acts 24:1-26. Take note of the part Felix plays in this little drama leading up to Paul's imprisonment. After Paul's pleas go seemingly unheard and he is put in prison, Felix calls for Paul often to hear him preach of "*righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come*".

As we read, it appears things are looking up for Felix and for the fate of Paul. It seems that Felix must be softening and surely he will become a believer of the one true God. But note it is immediately after Paul preaches about "*self-control and the judgment to come*" that we discover Felix's true motives. " . . . *He was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe, so he sent for him frequently and talked with him. When two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, but because Felix wanted to grant a favor to the Jews, he left Paul in prison.*"

**self-con·trol** (sɛlfkən-trōl')

n. : restraint exercised over one's own impulses, emotions, or desires

Could it have been a lack of self-control that caused Felix to get miffed when Paul didn't offer him a bribe? Did Felix's impulses, emotions and desires get the better of him?

When do our impulses, emotions or desires get the better of us? Could it be when that bag of Dove Dark Chocolates in the cabinet is "calling our name"? Could it be bouts of explosive anger? Could it be that impulse to talk about someone else, even when we know what we say isn't true? So where is that Fruit of the Holy Spirit of self-control anyway? It's a tough one.

*Lord, fill us with your Holy Spirit. We pray especially today for that oft-elusive Fruit of self-control. Fill us with restraint over our impulses, emotions and desires each day. Amen.*

Nanette Goings

**April 6, 2009**

Proverbs 25:28 - Self-Control

One of my favorite quotes heard at AA meetings is: "Instant gratification takes too long!"

God has delivered me from alcoholism and smoking. These are true miracles! My weight and poor eating habits remain a big self-control challenge. But every day I am also faced with the 'little' decisions. Will I or will I not: engage in gossip, get some exercise, take time to comfort someone, refrain from sarcasm, turn off the violent TV show? I believe that's where our walls are broken down. If we don't make the effort in the 'little' things (with lots of prayer, of course), how can we be protected and strong against the big temptations?

I prefer to look at self-control in a positive light. It's about yeses, not no-nos! St. Paul says that self-control is a fruit of the spirit. It's a positive result of self-sacrifice and delayed gratification, as I "let go and let God." It's about God transforming me into the likeness of Christ - about the Holy Spirit helping me to say no to the world and yes to heaven. Granted, this is happening at a glacial pace, but it's not about being perfect; it's about being perfected.

I really like this quote. "You have to decide what your highest priorities are and have the courage - pleasantly, smilingly, non-apologetically - to say 'no' to other things. And the way to do that is by having a bigger 'yes' burning inside." *Stephen Covey*

*Father God, please help me to see self-control as a pathway to becoming more like your beloved Son and help me let go of the need for instant gratification. Help me burn inside for the higher good and amazing blessings you have for me. Amen.*

Wendy Kerr

**April 7, 2009**

Titus 1:7-9—Self-Control

Paul tells Titus (and us) the personal qualities a Bishop should exhibit. Every Bishop should be self-controlled, hospitable, love what is good, be upright, holy, disciplined and "... hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it."

Starting with our Church's early years, we have struggled with Bishops that lack these qualities. Early in his ministry, Martin Luther found many Bishops who did not follow this model for Bishop's conduct. Men, chosen as Bishops, would chose parts of the Bible and ignored its true and complete message. Dr. Luther prayed God would change the sinner's hearts and lead people in a better direction. God lead him to oppose Bishops who did not hold to the trustworthy message, promoted wrong doctrine and deviant practices. Martin Luther's work resulted in a better Church that looked to God's word for its guidance.

We must pray for Bishops who are self-controlled, study scriptures, believe scriptures and encourage with doctrine based on the whole Bible. Pray that sinner's hearts will be changed and those inspired by scriptures and the leading of the Holy Spirit will become Bishops. Pray that Bishops will emulate Jesus' life and strive to become like him. We must pray that all of us (you and me) seek the personal qualities in our lives that Paul ascribes to Bishops.

*Our Father in Heaven. Hallowed be your Name. Your Kingdom come. Your will be done. Amen.*

Keith Anderson

**April 8, 2009**

Luke 22:29-46—Self-Control

In this passage, Peter says, “Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison or death.” Despite this promise, Jesus knows that Peter will lose his will power and deny ever knowing him. Yet Christ understands human weakness. Even though Peter’s promise will go unfulfilled, Jesus prays that Peter’s faith will remain strong and be an example for his brothers.

Later, when praying and confronting his own death, Jesus says, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” Jesus knows what terrible fate awaits him before he leaves this earth. Nonetheless, he understands what must be done for mankind. He also knows that it is God’s will that is in control. Although he is anguished, scripture tells us that the Father comforted him by sending an angel from heaven to give him strength.

God knows our human frailties, that life can be extremely hard at times. But we must rely on God for our strength and have faith in his compassion.

*Heavenly Father, may we fully realize that it is your will that guides our earthly lives. We are comforted by your mercy and love for us. Help us to trust in the fruit of the spirit that your son has offered us in his sacrifice.*

Nick Lehnert

**April 9, 2009**

John 13: 1-17- Maundy Thursday

In today's Gospel lesson we see Jesus, operating in all of the fruit of the Spirit. He is, after all the epitome of the fruitful tree (Psalm 1). He needed to be to work His ministry and to prepare his disciples to carry the message of salvation. And then He says to the disciples and to us today, *"I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."* (vs 15-17) This is the killer verse that kills pride and enables us to walk humbly with our God.

Upon our confession of faith the Holy Spirit grafts us into the vine where we start growing all of the fruits of the spirit. It is important too for us to see that the vine, Jesus, is also carrying within Himself all of the fruits, so we carry His message as we are conformed to His image.

When we minister, and find out the time was just right; or that we have given a word that was truly 'in season', then we are carrying His message and we may have washed another's feet with out actually handling a basin of water. Washing feet is a powerful experience for both the giver and the receiver.

*Holy Spirit, help me to respond, to your leading, to your message, and to your call to share Jesus' message to a dying world. In Jesus Name, Amen.*

Lee Quaintance

**April 10, 2009**

Matthew 27:41-44—Good Friday

Taunting—name-calling—it's what can really get your dander up—and even if you pretend you don't hear or you don't care—you often want to get revenge. Self-control can be a very tentative thing.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prays long and fervently to his Father—"Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." (Mark 14:36) It isn't like Jesus is looking for trouble or wants to suffer just for the sake of suffering.

But there on the cross, one of the greatest miracles took place. And the miracle is of what Jesus did not do! Despite the slandering of passers-by: "Hey Temple-Basher and Three-Day Builder! save yourself, if you really are the Son of God, and come on down from that cross!" "Save yourself" is essentially what the devil had challenged Jesus when Jesus was in the desert (Matthew 4:1-11). Now the religious leaders make fun of Jesus also. "He saved other people and he can't even save himself." Then, the robbers being executed with Jesus join in reviling him.

The self-control and trust in His Father made possible the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. Because Jesus endured it all just for us sinners, we have hope, the gift of salvation, the promise of eternal life.

*My Savior, thank you for resisting the temptation to leave that cross. You did it for me, unworthy though I am. You did it for me! Amen.*

Tyger Penson

**April 11, 2009**

Luke 23:44-49—Holy Saturday

All three of the Synoptic Gospel accounts describe Jesus' final words on the cross as being delivered in a loud voice ... shouted. His last words were not weakly breathed, in resignation or despair, but instead they were a triumphant statement of completion. With His work complete, Jesus placed His spirit into God's hands and then surrendered His life.

What exactly did Jesus achieve in this world? Was it delivery of His Gospel message or His battle with Satan that day for our sake? Most scholars agree that Jesus was seeing completion of the purpose that God had in mind from before creation, delivery of the Messianic promise from Genesis 3, and eternal fulfillment of all of the Old Testament provisions for mankind. His work was complete by the tearing of the veil in the temple, from top to bottom, giving us direct access to God. Through His one-time sacrifice on the cross, there was no need for the annual temple sacrifice. Our sacrificial lamb is a one-time deal that is perfect.

Just because Jesus brought the entire package to fulfillment does not mean that He is not still at work. Sitting at the right hand of God, Jesus is still ministering to our every need and giving us comfort in our struggles. God is able to look upon us with Jesus as the "filter". When He looks at us, He sees Jesus. And that is the Good News that comes from that horrible, dark day.

*Holy Father, help us to see your hand in all of the aspects of our lives. Guide us that we might accept your plan for us and help us to willingly surrender to your will. We pray in the name of your Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ...  
Amen.*

John Benson